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GAVEL CHANGES HANDS—Mrs. Floretta Lauber of Arcadia hands gavel to Roy Johnson of Monterey Park as new officers were installed by West San Gabriel Valley Planning Council. At left is Henry Teroshila of Monterey Park, new secre-

tary-treasurer of organization, and at right is Ken Topping of the Regional Planning Commission. On vacation when picture was taken was George Dragicevich of Temple City, who will serve as council vice president and program chairman.

New General Plan for Area Poses Problems for Future

By HELEN O. SCHRADER.

Released last week by the Regional Planning Commission, with the blessing of the County Board of Supervisors, was an area general plan for the West San Gabriel Valley.

In the works since 1954, it offers a unifying concept for improving the urban environment in the portion of the valley generally bounded by the San Gabriel Mountains on the north, the San Gabriel River on the east, the Repetto Hills on the south and the Verdugo Mountains on the west.

The area general plan has been endorsed in principle by the West San Gabriel Valley Planning Council and by all of the area's 15 city councils including Alhambra, Arcadia, Bradbury, Duarte, El Monte, Monrovia, Monterey Park, Pasadena, Rosemead, San Gabriel, San Marino, Sierra Madre, South El Monte, South Pasadena and Temple City.

Qualified Endorsement

Endorsements by Temple City and Rosemead included qualifications regarding the future location of State Route 164, the proposed north-south freeway linking the Foothill Freeway with the San Bernardino and San Gabriel River Freeways. It is expected generally to parallel Rosemead Boulevard.

The plan is based on extensive community and area analyses and on consideration of three alternative patterns for future development. These alternatives are dispersion, in which future development is scattered; corridors, which would locate future commercial employment and high-density residential growth along major transportation lines; and centers, clustering future commercial, employment and high-density residential growth around central points, such as "downtowns."

The centers concept was the unanimous choice of the West San Gabriel Valley Planning Council because it best represents planning goals reflected in a majority of community plans, takes into account needed solutions to area problems and offers an imaginative approach to capitalizing on area potentials.

Major Departure

A major departure from existing trends is reflected in the centers concept. In order to achieve it, local government must be willing to use its power to channel new development into desired locations; publicly acquire and re-market large land parcels for more intensive use; encourage a maximum diversity of features within the new areas; accept dominance of the chosen form within individual communities.

The area general plan is designed to accomplish four purposes:

—Furnish a framework for relating each community to the entire area.

—Identify area problems, how they affect the future and how they might be solved.

—Provide a guide and a positive direction for public and private planning decisions having potential inter-community and area-wide impact.

—Provide a realistic basis for better planning coordination among the 15 cities, the county and other public agencies.

Objectives

Environmental objectives in the plan include: prolonged usability of the area's older housing; an enlarged spectrum of housing, employment, educational and recreational opportunities; enhanced community identities, revitalized downtown areas, great mobility of area residents and improved esthetic qualities.

Today the west valley is urbanized into a predominantly single-family residential setting. By 1985, an increase of 153,000 residents over the current total of 668,000 is expected.

The common challenge is one of planning for a maturing urban area. The common questions are: When and where to intensify development? What the costs and benefits involved? How to intensify? What types of facilities are needed. How to preserve the best of the existing environment.

Related Ideas

These questions give rise to a number of related ideas. For instance, most area residents attach importance to the private single-family residential setting. How can this preference be reconciled with intensification of residential neighborhoods?

Approximately one-third of the dwelling units in the west valley were built before World War II. Although 60,000 dwelling units will be added by 1985, this growth will not fully replace obsolete housing, especially in areas now zoned for apartments. How can older neighborhoods be conserved and private enterprise be encouraged to build in areas most in need of rebuilding?

Strong community identities have been submerged by repetitious urban development. How can further growth be channeled to reawaken a "sense of community?"

Diluted Dominance

The early dominance of the older "downtowns" has been seriously diluted by the establishment of new shopping centers. How can the "downtown" regain its share of the local economy and once again serve as a strong focal point for communities?

There are only some of the problems posed by the study.

Answers must be found by local planners and county and area planners, working together, sensitive to the needs and wishes of the present population but aware of needs which will develop in the next two decades.

Future articles in this series will consider the valley as it was yesterday and it is today: the people, their history, their homes, jobs, transportation and their plans for the future.





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